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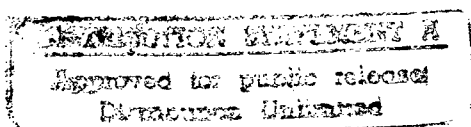
NOT QUITE WAR:
THE LINK BETWEEN OPERATIONAL PROTECTION AND THE PRINCIPLES
OF MOOTW: AN EXAMINATION OF SOMALIA OPERATIONS

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.



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ABSTRACT

The United States will continue to be drawn into Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) in the post Cold War era. Although the American public desires to assist societies in distress, there is great intolerance for casualties to military forces, particularly in the absence of clear American interests. It is therefore critical that commanders plan for the operational protection if American military forces are to participate in Military Operations Other Than War.

An examination of the two major Somali operations, UNITAF and UNOSOM II, shows that there is a clear correlation between observing the Principles of MOOTW, and enhancing operational protection, or ignoring them and putting the force at risk. The American-led UNITAF succeeded in providing relief supplies to Somalia and security to relief workers. The military objective was attainable and complemented broader political and economic initiatives. Overwhelming force was brought to bear to ensure Security was maintained. The force remained neutral with regard to the internal Somali conflict thus maintaining Legitimacy. This enabled the force to show Restraint and minimize the risk of inadvertent combat. Unity of Effort was maintained throughout the operation. All of these factors enhanced operational protection.

Conversely, during UNOSOM II, the mission was not successful. Military objectives were out of synch with the greatly expanded political, economic and social goals of nation building. The military force was not large enough or sufficiently equipped for this mission. When the military entered into armed conflict with a powerful clan leader, the principles of Legitimacy and Restraint were lost. The multiple chains of command prevented the operation from achieving Unity of Effort. The result was greater risk to the force and a weakening of operational protection.

The American excursion into Somalia was dominated by haunting images: ragged Somali children staring numbly at the world's cameras, starving due to the effects of war and famine; American Marines emerging from the sea under the harsh glare of a media frenzy, heralding the entry of America's military into Peace Operations; the battered body of an American soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu by a jeering mob - the very people the Americans had come to save. These images helped shape the course of the American effort in Somalia which in turn helped define the limits of American participation in future Peace Operations.

Although a sympathetic American public wanted to alleviate Somali suffering, there were limits to American largess. Other images were burned into the conscience of a wary nation: fire fights and body counts from a war in Vietnam that ended blind faith in government; mangled bodies emerging from the rubble of the Marine Barracks in Beirut; High tech wizardry from Desert Storm making it appear that war can be won without heavy American casualties. These experiences have collectively manifested themselves in American society as a reluctance to give the government a free hand in foreign intrigue, an abiding faith in the superiority of American military technology and an unwillingness to tolerate military losses in operations without a clear connection to American interests. It has been said of the Mogadishu fire fight on 03 October 1993 resulting in 18 American deaths, "that fifteen-hour span will most likely influence American military policy for years to come."¹ This military policy will continue to hear calls for participation in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) despite the casualties in Somalia. Consequently, a primary challenge of commanders will be to provide operational protection for forces while operating within the broader structure of the Principles of MOOTW.

IMPACT ON PARTICIPATION IN MOOTW

We have already seen evidence of the impact of the Somalia experience on American policy in a reluctance to become involved in the Rwandan crisis. "The Clinton administration's refusal to respond to the genocide in Rwanda that began in April 1994 was due in part to its retreat from

Somalia, announced after the deaths of 18 US Army Rangers on October 3, 1993.² While the images of starving Somalis initially fueled US action, images of terrified refugees and mutilated bodies elicited no such demands for US intervention in Rwanda. American concerns delayed the deployment of even a token force to Rwanda. The United States was roundly criticized in the international press as suffering from paranoia stemming from the Somalia experience - arguably an accurate description of American misgivings.

The United States was likewise reluctant to participate directly in the Bosnian operation, but agreed to do so to maintain NATO's viability in European affairs as well as to validate America's leadership of NATO. If history and public opinion polls are any indication, multiple combat deaths in Bosnia will result in a nervous public demanding the withdrawal of American forces.

The irony of the Somali operation is that many good things did come out of it. "There were successes acknowledged by both Somalis and relief officials. The famine has ended, and in much of the countryside, life is returning to normal. Hundreds of thousands of children were vaccinated, wells were dug, roads were built and farmers returned to their fields under military protection."³ The American military went to Somalia with the best of intentions, served skillfully and courageously in the face of adversity and largely ended the famine that threatened the lives of millions. Yet the enduring legacy of the Somalia mission is that of failure: cheering crowds and dead Americans. However, when the scope of the Somalia operation is examined, the casualties suffered by the Americans were not excessive, particularly when it is realized that the majority of these casualties occurred on one day of combat: "Of the 100,000 Americans who served here since December 1992, 30 were killed and 175 wounded, many of them in the search for General Aidid."⁴ Clearly, commanders at all levels should strive to minimize casualties - however it is equally clear that there is often an unavoidable element of risk in Peace Operations. An examination of how the principles of MOOTW were applied in Somalia and their interaction with the tenets of operational protection have implications for commanders in future Peace Operations.

II. BACKGROUND

"First we will create a secure environment in the hardest hit part of Somalia so that food can move from ships overland to the people in the countryside devastated by starvation. And second, once we have created that secure environment, we will withdraw our troops handing the security mission back to a regular UN peacekeeping force. Our mission has a limited objective,... We will not stay one day longer than is absolutely necessary." President George Bush, Dec 4, 1992

So thus, in the waning days of his Presidency, George Bush committed the American military to Peace Operations in Somalia. A reasonable question one might ask is, "why Somalia"? The world had not reacted to other similar crises with the same alacrity: "Southern Sudan and Mozambique...have lost perhaps more people than Somalia to war and starvation... These are questions about the moral duties of a nation."⁵ As the sole remaining super power in the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States was struggling to answer these questions of moral duty as well as to define its relationship with the United Nations in a restructured world order.

The answer to the question of "why Somalia," is that the world media had made it a cause celebre and it appeared manageable. Fresh from victory in the Gulf War and armed with media images of an impoverished people, "Bush understandably wanted a military mission both doable and spectacular to unveil formally the new world order he had helped introduce."⁶ The problem, as events would painfully prove, was that Somalia was not the easy mission the American administration thought it was.

THE SOMALI QUAGMIRE

The Somalia George Bush had committed American forces to in December 1992 was a very dangerous place. The civil war which began in May 1988 had by 1992 destroyed all vestiges of civil order and largely brought on the famine that had captured the world's attention. Somalia was not so much a sovereign nation as it was a collection of armed camps with allegiance to a handful of enigmatic clan leaders. The regime of Siad Barre, the Somali dictator throughout the 1970's and 80's, had set the stage for the problems the United States and United Nations would encounter in the 1990's. Siad was able to manipulate Somalia's strategic position at the Horn of Africa into leverage with both the Americans and the Soviets. The result of this maneuvering was an influx of over

100,000 Soviet and American weapons into Somalia. Perhaps the greatest evil Siad brought to Somalia was his manipulation of the clan system to keep his antagonists in check: "...the worst damage Siad Barre did to Somali culture was to politicize clan relations by encouraging conflict at the level of the five clan families."⁷ The clan is the basic unit of Somali culture and political allegiance. A Somali proverb describes the nature of clan loyalty and the contentiousness of Somali society: "Me and my clan against the world; me and my brother against the clan; me against my brother."⁸

Siad Barre was driven from power in May 1992 by the forces of a powerful clan leader, General Mohamad Farah Aidid. With the abrogation of all civil authority, the clans quickly filled the power void. In addition to the plethora of small arms scattered throughout the slums of Mogadishu, the clans' armies were equipped with "technicals", Range Rover type-vehicles modified with heavy machine guns. The armies of the clans were fortified by an amphetamine laced leaf known as khat. Khat has the benefits of suppressing hunger and imparting the user with alternate senses of invulnerability, irritability and anxiety. It was khat that gave the clan's gunmen their surly demeanor. The clan militias placed a higher premium on obtaining khat than on obtaining food. Not surprisingly, key clan leaders profited directly from the khat trade. Combine this with the fact that "guns and aggressiveness, including the willingness to accept casualties, are intrinsic parts of this culture, with women and children considered part of the clan's order of battle,"⁹ and you have the origins of a significant force protection problem.

DESTRUCTION OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE

Another operational protection concern that loomed large for mission planners was the physical condition of the Somali infrastructure and its impact on operational logistics elements. Somalia is a desert-like region of nearly 250 million square miles. Throughout this vast area, the infrastructure was in shambles from the effects of war and neglect:

"Somalia had primitive airfields, barely usable seaports, disintegrating road networks that did not link population centers, and roadways rendered impassable by fallen bridges and washouts. There was no electricity, no water, no food, no government, and no economy...Deploying to Somalia was like going to the moon: ... Every scrap of lumber, drop of fuel, drink of water, and slice of bread had to be brought in from outside."¹⁰

This affected not only the long term sustainment of the deployed forces but also was a key obstacle to moving relief supplies to Somalia's cities and hard hit portions of the interior. Operating successfully in this harsh environment would be one of the bright spots of the mission and validated the importance of the theater-level logistics system. This type of capability will undoubtedly be needed in future Peace Operations. There are still significant deficiencies in national sea lift capability, which carries up to 95 percent of a deployment's lift requirements.

III. OPERATIONAL PROTECTION AND THE PRINCIPLES OF MOOTW

"Operational protection is aimed at preserving the combat effectiveness of one's own and friendly forces and assets deployed within a given theater of operations, so that they can be employed at the decisive time and place... Operational protection not only pertains to protecting one's own resources but also to friendly forces and in MOOTW to the civil infrastructure of friendly nations,"¹¹

The protection of one's own and friendly forces has always been one of the primary responsibilities of the military commander. What makes this particularly hazardous in MOOTW is the potential for rapid transition from non-combat operations to combat. Operational protection cannot be viewed as a function separate from the overall military, political, economic, and social efforts but must contribute to achieving national strategic goals. The military commander in all likelihood will not be in charge of these synergistic efforts but will be tasked with supporting the lead agency, which may be unfamiliar with the military aspects of the mission. The requirement to protect the civil infrastructure can be particularly challenging in locations such as Somalia or Bosnia when that infrastructure may be dissolved or dysfunctional. This in no way relieves the operational commander of the responsibility of devising means to overcome these difficulties. He must operate within the principles of MOOTW while implementing the tenets of operational force protection. The following principle components of operational protection that played a significant role in Somalia were: *Collection of intelligence for indicators and warning; Direct protection of major forces; Protection of operational logistics elements; Operations security.*

THE PRINCIPLES OF MOOTW AND THE SOMALIA OPERATION

The principles of MOOTW provide the operational commander with guidelines to assist in the planning and conduct of operations. They are not an infallible prescription for success but must be applied judiciously and tailored to meet specific mission requirements. They must be reassessed as the operation progresses and the situation changes. This is particularly important in Peace Operations and must be understood by the entire force because "Peace Operations have a unique ability to combine the tactical, the operational, and the strategic levels of war. A single unwise tactical move by a soldier on patrol can instantly change the character of an entire operation and ... can also affect strategic considerations,"¹² Somalia presents a graphic example of success and failure in the employment of the principles of MOOTW and how tactical actions can have strategic effects. There is a direct correlation between employing these principles and enhancing force protection or ignoring them and putting the force at risk.

OBJECTIVE

"Inherent in the principle of *Objective* is the need to understand what constitutes **mission success** and what might cause the operation to be terminated before success is achieved,"¹³ (emphasis in the original). This speaks to recognizing desired end state and translating political, economic and social goals into military objectives. American involvement in Somalia can be divided into three distinct phases, each with a separate mission and force structure:

Operation	Dates	US Forces /Numbers	Mission
PROVIDE RELIEF-UNOSOM	AUG 92-DEC 92	AIRLIFT RESOURCES	HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
RESTORE HOPE-UNITAF	DEC 92-MAY 93	1 ST MEF / 28,000	HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE/SECURITY
USFORSOM-UNOSOM II	MAY 93-MAR 94	RANGERS/DELTA DET/10 TH MOUNTAIN (QUICK REACTION FORCE) / 4500	PEACE ENFORCEMENT/ NATION BUILDING

Operation Provide Relief

The goal of Operation Provide Relief was simply to get relief supplies into Somalia and assist relief efforts. "During the 6 months of Operation Provide Relief a daily average of 20 sorties delivered approximately 150 metric tons of supplies; in total, more than 28,000 metric tons of critically needed relief supplies were brought into Somalia by this airlift."¹⁴ The objective was attainable and within the capabilities of the forces assigned. While the operation was deemed a success, it brought to light a growing security problem on the ground.

UNITAF

Food and relief supplies had essentially become the new coin of the realm in Somalia¹⁵ and its control was essential to the power of the clan leaders. The clans were taking a cut of relief supplies, impeding their distribution and using profits to buy guns and reward their loyalists. This led to the UNITAF operation in which 28,000 Marines of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) were brought in to establish a secure environment to allow humanitarian efforts to proceed unhindered. There was a clear link between political and social goals and military objectives. CENTCOM'S mission was essentially to secure facilities and distribution points, keep transport routes open, provide security for the various relief organizations and assist in the humanitarian efforts. Once these conditions were met, U.N. peacekeeping forces would take over relief efforts.

UNOSOM II

UNOSOM II began in May 1993 when control of the operation was passed to the United Nations under Turkish Lieutenant General Bir. Significantly, the objective of the mission was expanded to include promoting political reconciliation and revitalizing the economic infrastructure - a process termed nation building. The United States would provide logistics support and a Quick Reaction Force of 1,150 soldiers. The link between political and economic goals and military objectives was no longer clear. Previously, the Somalis had been responsible for rebuilding their nation, but now a

solution was to be imposed upon them. This unrealistic mission put the protection of friendly forces at risk because it abandoned the position of neutrality. General Bir changed the ROE which now stated: "Organized, armed militias...are considered a threat to UNOSOM forces and may be engaged without provocation."¹⁶ The loss of neutrality and the implementation of more aggressive ROE sacrificed *Legitimacy* in the eyes of the Somalis. *Restraint* was lost, following an attack on Pakistani troops in June 1993, when the United States conducted several air attacks within Mogadishu. These attacks resulted in civilian casualties and heavy collateral damage to surrounding structures including a hospital. The mission now pitted the forces of the United States and United Nations in violent opposition against the forces of Somalia's most powerful clan leader.

Security

The principle of *Security* was achieved during UNITAF by employing overwhelming force, formidable combat power, and robust but reasonable rules of engagement (ROE). This protection extended to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private voluntary organizations (PVOs) either directly or indirectly through the threat of use of superior force. The Somalis recognized at the outset that the Marines were a *credible* force. The ROE during this phase of the operation were clear and concise: "...no bandits, no technicals, no checkpoints and no visible weapons."¹⁷ What American forces did not try to do was seize all weapons. This would have disrupted the balance of power between the clans and in the words of General Zinni, "killed lots of them and killed lots of us."¹⁸ Total disarmament was not practical, so a policy was devised that addressed the major threat to the operational force.

Legitimacy/Restraint

The principle of *Legitimacy* was maintained because the Marines remained neutral throughout the mission. The Americans were able to exercise *Restraint* because "...there was very little violence directed at U.S. forces during the first five months. The crew served weapons classified as a threat

were withdrawn or hidden by their owners in response to the overwhelming show of force by UNITAF.”¹⁹ All of these factors worked together to enhance force protection.

Conversely, *Security* was not achieved during UNOSOM II primarily because the force was *not credible* in view of the expanded mission. The U.N. force of 20,000 had proved to be ineffective, handicapped by national political agendas. The American force of 4,500 was not large enough and not adequately equipped for the military requirements associated with nation building. The requests for additional armored vehicles and AC-130 gunships were turned down at the strategic level for fear of expanding the conflict and invoking congressional opposition - even though the military action underway was already expanding the conflict by hunting for General Aidid. This continued the “..American’s inability to match ends with means...”²⁰ This also speaks to utilizing the wrong forces for the changed mission. Civil Affairs (C.A.) units were trained in various aspects of nation building yet only 36 specialists were sent to Somali instead of the 300 personnel originally planned. Virtually all of the army’s C.A. units are in the reserve and the operation was not planned to be of such duration to justify their activation. C.A. units could have been applied *at the proper place and proper time* to assist in helping the Somalis rebuild their infrastructure and turn the direction of the mission away from confrontation, thus contributing to force protection.

Unity of Effort

Unity of Effort “...emphasizes the need for ensuring all means are directed to a common purpose. However in MOOTW, achieving *unity of effort* is often complicated by a variety of...participants, the lack of definitive command arrangements...and varying views of the objective.”²¹ *Unity of effort* was easier to obtain during UNITAF because it was largely an American operation and the mission was smaller in scope. *Unity of effort* embodies unity of command. A cohesive, well-organized command structure was in place in the headquarters staff of the 1st MEF and there was a clear chain of command. A liaison cell allowed for representation and coordination by other national contingents. Conversely, the staff of the much more complex UNOSOM II mission was never equipped to function

as a battle staff and the chain of command was convoluted. There were separate chains of command for U.N. forces, American forces, U.S. Special Operations forces, NAVCENT Marines and PSYOPS units. There was virtually no coordination among these various command elements each carrying out independent operations. American forces themselves had at least three separate stovepipe intelligence organizations which did not share information or coordinate efforts. *Unity of Effort* was clearly not achieved.

Perseverance

Perseverance is among the most difficult principles to observe because it may require the commitment of military forces for a considerable period of time to achieve strategic goals. This goes against the grain of American political wisdom which strives to remove American forces from MOOTW as soon as possible. The United States announced at the start of UNITAF that the mission would be of short duration with the intention of turning over operations to UN forces. This told the Somalis that if they waited long enough, most of the American forces, the most formidable in the operation, would go away. It thus created a dangerous situation from an operational protection perspective for the less capable follow-on forces when the Somalis chose to contest the intervention.

Perseverance can be measured in other ways as well, namely the willingness to absorb casualties to complete the mission. The deaths of 18 Americans during UNOSOM II had two immediate results: First, the armor and additional firepower previously requested by the operational commander was sent to Somalia to bolster force protection. Second, the Americans assumed a strictly defensive posture under orders from Washington and quietly awaited the set withdrawal day of 31 March 1994. This lack of *perseverance* diminished the protection of the force because it encouraged an adversary to attack major forces and inflict sufficient casualties to cause the force to be withdrawn. It diminished our status in the eyes of the world order we were trying to influence. "A Somali who watched the Marines land in December 1992 and leave fifteen months later, observed, 'It looks

like the Americans are slipping out quietly. It's a strange way for a superpower to act."²²

Other Factors

The United States made other mistakes in Somalia which detracted from operational protection and were in conflict with the principles of MOOTW. The Americans were guilty of the cardinal sin of not knowing the enemy. "The American commanders believed the Somalis to be intellectually primitive, culturally shallow, and militarily craven. All three beliefs proved expensively incorrect."²³ These misconceptions led to a breakdown in operations security. The Somali commander who led the force that engaged the Rangers on 03 October had been schooled at a Soviet military academy in Odessa for three years. He had observed that the commandos essentially used the same general scheme in taking down a building. He correctly surmised that by targeting the helicopters providing air support and engaging the force on the ground with overwhelming numbers, the operation would be thrown into chaos.

Somalia had been low on the list of intelligence priorities before the relief effort began and this knowledge gap was never completely closed, particularly in regard to Somali culture. American troops were afraid to eat the food, were hesitant to interact with the people and couldn't speak the language. "The most powerful military machine in the world could tell a big missile to hit a tiny target and ferry millions of tons of equipment to a faraway land. But for most American soldiers, just saying hello to a Somali was impossible,"²⁴ General Zinni, USMC, an assistant to the U.S. Special Envoy, believed that the greatest initial need of an operational commander was cultural intelligence. This included understanding how the political factions interacted and how the social structure worked. The Americans arrived with a cultural arrogance that alienated the population weakening the legitimacy of the operation in the Somali's eyes. This impeded American efforts when the mission turned to nation building. It also compromised the security of the force because the Americans had virtually no intelligence for indicators and warning from within Aidid's organization.

IV. CONCLUSION

American political leaders undoubtedly will be called upon to contribute forces to Operations Other Than War in crisis spots around the world. The United States is viewed as having the military capability, economic strength and logistics expertise to play a leadership role in such operations. Indeed, as leader of NATO and the United Nations and compelled by a populace that hears a moral call to lend assistance to societies in distress, it will be difficult to ignore the summons. American participation in MOOTW is complicated by the fact that this same population has a low tolerance for casualties in operations where American interests are not clear. The operational protection of forces must be a primary consideration of commanders if American forces are to remain active participants in Military Operations Other Than War.

Relief operations in Somalia demonstrated that the protection of operational forces can be enhanced by observing the Principles of MOOTW or conversely, can be threatened by ignoring them. The American led UNITAF operation succeeded in its stated mission of delivering relief supplies and providing security. The military *objective* was attainable and complemented broader political and economic initiatives. Overwhelming forces were brought to bear for Security to counter any aggression from Somali factions. This force also allowed the United States to exercise *Restraint* and to minimize the occurrence of unintended combat. American forces also maintained their position of neutrality among the various warring clan factions. This neutrality enhanced the *Legitimacy* of the operation in the eyes of the Somali citizenry, which increased the operational protection of the force by staying outside of the internal Somali conflict. The United States, as the leader of the operation, determined the goals and set the agenda of the mission, maintaining *Unity of Effort*. This *Unity of Effort* kept all participants working towards the same goals, coordinated all operations and contributed to operational protection.

The second Somali operation, UNOSOM II, was a United Nations led mission with the expanded objective of nation building. The military objectives, which grew to open conflict with Somali clans, were out of synch with the political, economic and social objectives. Not all coalition partners supported the more aggressive approach to solving Somalia's problems. This, in addition to multiple chains of command, diluted the *Unity of Effort*. This lack of *Unity of Effort* was in evidence during the failed raid on 03 October when a relief force was delayed in reaching trapped Army Rangers due to multiple chains of command and poor coordination. The force structure itself was not of sufficient strength for the more aggressive military mission. This clearly put the protection of the force at risk with a Somali enemy that was vastly underrated. This sacrificed both *Restraint* and *Legitimacy* making the force more likely to be engaged in combat. Civil Affairs forces should also be part of the force mix to support the political goal of nation building.

The principle of *Perseverance* was largely ignored for both operations. UNITAF was advertised from the beginning as a short duration operation. UNOSOM II essentially ended following the deaths of the 18 Americans during the raid to capture General Aidid. The lack of *Perseverance* in an operation puts the protection of a force at risk in two ways: First, it encourages attacks on forces to bring political pressure to bear for their removal; Second, by setting a deadline, it encourages an adversary to wait until the more substantial forces are withdrawn before commencing an attack.

The other lessons of Somalia for operational protection are not new: Never underestimate your adversaries and learn the culture. It must always be remembered that in Military Operations Other than War, we are attempting to avoid or terminate conflict. This speaks to understanding the social problems, economic conditions, and political structure that are at the core of turmoil in a society. It is essential to have a clear understanding of all of these factors so that our actions do not inadvertently put the force at risk while simultaneously hindering diplomatic efforts.

The Principles of MOOTW and tenets of operational protection do not together comprise a checklist that if blindly followed will somehow protect a force from all harm that might befall it.

Instead, it provides the commander with a process to systematically evaluate the risks in light of objectives and desired end state and make intelligent decisions while carrying out the mission.

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- ⁸ Jonathan Stevenson. "Losing Mogadishu." 3.
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- ²¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 3-07, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War. II-3.
- ²² Jonathan Stevenson. "Losing Mogadishu." 70.
- ²³ Ibid. 115.
- ²⁴ Ibid. 59.

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